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ALAN POWERS, *Enid Marx: The Pleasures of Pattern*. Lund Humphries, London, 2018. 176 pp, 194 illustrations. £47.53. ISBN 978 1 84822 252 6

This is the first monograph on the artist, designer and collector Enid Marx. It aims to present the range and quality of her work as a textile artist, industrial designer, book illustrator, stamp designer, print-maker, writer, teacher and campaigner to wider audiences and to examine 'the life of the person behind it' (p 8). Author Alan Powers certainly achieves the former, although his success with the latter is arguably more limited.

The book, which is lavishly illustrated, is organised into six chapters that develop chronologically and thematically. Opening with the early years: her Jewish émigré, middle-class family in North London, education at Roedean and the Royal College of Art, it moves onto Marx's apprenticeship in block-printed textiles with Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher and her interwar work as a textile designer-maker. Next comes design for industry: the famous upholstery designs for London Underground (1937), work for the Utility scheme, and election as a Royal Designer for Industry (RDI). Powers also looks at lesser known excursions in the 1950s and 1960s: pattern designs for carpets, ceramic tiles, laminates and leather. Involving abstract and figurative motifs – Marx's fascination with Popular Art was growing at this time – she combined a serious commitment to design for a moral and social purpose with a sense of fun. Designs for embossed linings for leather luggage for air travel, for instance, involved stylised aeroplanes; Marx apparently loved to recount how the propellers had to be removed when jet planes came in (p 84).

Chapter four considers designs for paper, print and publishing, from decorative pattern papers for the Curwen Press to covers for Chatto & Windus and illustrated children's books. *Bulgy the Barrage Balloon* (1941) was a particular favourite. Marx's interest in Popular Art, which she shared with her life-long friend and companion Margaret Lambert, is the focus of chapter five which examines their belief in a 'useable past' grounded in the history of everyday life as a 'model for future forms' (p 123). 'Barge decoration' or 'Pedlar Dolls' communicated folk traditions in a 'new register' (p 126) stimulating an authentic modern language of decoration. Now part of the 'British Folk Art Collection'

at Compton Verney, Warwickshire, the Marx-Lambert collection is a significant inspiration for the current interest in folk art among artists such as Jeremy Deller.

The section on block-printed textiles will be of particular interest to readers. Powers argues convincingly for the international significance of this work. His explication of process and attention to the specificities of pattern design within in the parameters that Marx set herself is compelling. Detailed analysis of individual designs, repeats and motifs extrapolate her sensitivity to figure-ground relationship, balancing positive and negative shapes, colour, texture, and unity of material and process. In some ways, however, the final chapter 'Essential Marx', which concentrates on her work as a design teacher and campaigner, is most revealing in terms of legacy. Marx envisaged art schools as laboratories not only for industry but also for life, a view that chimes with V&A Director Tristram Hunt's recently launched initiative DesignLab Nation, which promotes the social value of design thinking through hands-on making, something surely Marx would have approved of.

Drawing on previously unseen archival sources, this book makes a significant contribution to redressing 'the balance' (p 8), enabling Marx's work to be more widely known and appreciated. Yet, as Powers acknowledges, it is not definitive. Some of the most poignant material - from small indignities such as being replaced by Graham Sutherland at the Ruskin School of Art (Marx later opposed his election as an RDI on the grounds that he was a painter) to her time in Freudian analysis – speaks of the challenges faced by women living unconventional lives, the strategies they adopted and the sometimes terrible price exacted. Marx's analysis was paid for by Francesca Allinson, a friend who tragically took her own. An earlier letter from Allinson had attempted to allay Marx's youthful anxieties about 'not getting picked up' by a man, reassuring her that she was one of the few people she knew 'who really know how to love' (p 28). Marx was an outsider, at one point Powers terms her a 'misfit' (p 61). She, nevertheless, also saw herself as one of a group, part of a wider movement of professional women working in the arts and culture during the Twentieth Century

about whom too little is yet known. For them, as for Marx, a feminist lens is required to probe deeper into understanding more about the work and the lives of the women behind it.

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